



Saturday 4th September 2021



Southend 2 – Wrexham 2



Denzil was in a state of shock and his eyes, watering like those of a constipated owl, blinked uncertainly in the unaccustomed daylight. More used to being indulged by his vampire like preferences for dark shadowy places, they craved to be shielded by sunglasses. But those, along with his crates of hand lotion, unemployed hairbrushes and huge pile of Dear Diedre's were currently residing some distance away, safe under his cot.

He had just spent almost the entire bank holiday down with the kids. Waving his phone in the air, its torchlight mode permanently set to on, whilst cutting enough cheesy shapes to satisfy the production needs of a Kraft factory for at least a month. So, whistling "Dancin' is what to do" he had stepped aboard his electric skateboard, his internal clock still set to Sad Dad time, and headed for Roots Hall hours ahead of his usual surfacing time.

Now, with only Trigger's company to hand, he was feeling rather lost. If only Trigs could spare a moment to look up from his hamper, then he could demonstrate a few of his latest moves to him. But Trigger, only too aware of the risk of glancing up for even a second, was quite happy to just continue on sampling the baskets contents. Another avenue of escape was available to out pet dormouse of course in the form of a match day programme. But that too had unwelcomed caveats attached, beyond that is actually having to pay for one rather than 'borrowing' a copy of someone else's. For example, should Trigger make the short trip up to the refreshment bar where they were available, then that entertained a strong possibility of encountering Uncle Albert whilst he was still in high energy mode.

Everything is of course relative (Although Boycie denies his relationship to his brother at every opportunity) so what would perhaps be simply evidence of excitement and anticipation in any sane person, becomes fever pitch in the case of our terminally confused O.A.G. Accordingly, former work colleagues have learnt to take cover at games just as soon as he lopes onto the scenery. However, once he has bored the rear end off a couple of unlucky victims, he does begin to calm down a little. As ever though, the case still remains one of 'Light blue touch paper ..."

Not too sure just when exactly the breeding season for sheep occurs, but Spring kind of jumps to mind. So why, with autumn just off stage, were there a herd of them, all branded with red paint and huddled together, inside the North Bank? A few baa's were being emitted, but that was pretty much it as far as clues were going. Was an episode of Countryfile about to be recorded? If so, Denzil, oiling down 'Samantha', the one follicle upon his otherwise featureless desert of a bonce, was more than up for a dance on part. Could 'Strictly' be in his future?

Suddenly there was a loud rumpus just behind us. Quick, concerned, glances confirmed that, for once, Albert was innocent. So, was an alibi in the form of an unknown twin, one who was more successfully abandoned at birth, about to descend upon us? Surely not even Ron would be that evil! And so thankfully it proved to be. Many relieved sighs of relief greeting the sight of a rather inebriated and boisterously cheerful Son of Trigger.

Celebrating his forthcoming nuptials, he was on a stag outing with his friends and had thoughtfully decided to descend upon his rather uncertain looking male parent. Now, it should be understood right away that Trigger didn't harbour any doubts at all about his responsibilities as a dad, but, with over a third of his hamper still to be unwrapped, was he about to be forced into a position where he might have to share?

The incredible amount of noise being generated around the ground went up a couple of notches as the two teams took to the pitch. The game, featuring as it did two ex-football league sides, had more the favour of a far more senior encounter than that of non-league. Not only was the stadium, certainly compared to Wealdstone's, of a superior quality but the game also had that certain air about it. Both sides, the one from the Essex Riviera and the one made up of Hollywood extras, excluding an aura of class and accomplishment that augured well for the match to come.

The officials however didn't generate any sense of authority or confidence at all. Akin to Macbeth's witches, they hovered uselessly around the battlefield. Lean wraiths, their features gaunt and stretched as they awaited the one moment in the game which even they couldn't botch. A photo opportunity with the match mascots!

Wrexham kicked off attacking the South Bank. Twice!. On the first occasion we had shown our eagerness to get in amongst them by sprinting up field just as soon as the whistle had been blown. Their prima donna of a player though had posed rather than kicked the ball. So, diva like, he started crying out to the ref that life wasn't fair, he wasn't ready and besides, that nasty Mr Murphy had just breathed down the back of his neck. Revealing the generosity that he was to extend to our visitors all game through, the referee meekly acquiesced to his pleas to be allowed to take the kick off again and thus, the stage had been set.

To be fair to Mr Magoo's feeble doubleganger, he had quite a reasonable game for its opening twenty minutes or so. Something that most of the referees we have suffered so far this season has also managed to achieve. Which makes you stop to think for a moment. Could it really be that, rather than just being totally incompetent and utterly useless, they, like our younger, inexperienced players, are also guilty of being unable to sustain their concentration and edge for long periods?

Nah. Much more fun just to treat them like the total clowns that they are 😊

Boycie was certainly enjoying himself. Not only did he have the match officials to play with, but also an ex blue going by the name of Lennon. A great number of acerbic comments being launched in his direction from the far from sealed lips of Mr Green. Indeed, he received almost as many pointed remarks as did the herd behind the North Bank goal. Whilst the caretaker at Tracy Island International enjoys the views to be had inside the rocky promontory that is called Wales, he does not hold the natives of that region in such high regard, and he wasn't being at all shy in letting them know!

It was also fair to say that our visitors had obviously expected us to simply roll over and die just as soon as they had flourished their bit part contracts and thrown bucks in our faces. Certainly, their cocky attitude shouted that out loudly. Accordingly, when we instead displayed considerable skill and finesse whilst boring down upon their goalmouth in an almost continuous fashion, so they began to throw tantrums. Not only were we not bowing to them, but we also weren't tapping our brows or indeed showing them any form of respect at all. We hadn't even saluted Phil Parkinson, their manager! Another much favoured Boycie target, Didn't we know our place?

On the evidence before us. No!

Their one tactic brought back unfond memories of Mr Becks Cambridge, namely hoofing the ball as far upfield and into touch as possible. A subtle tactic, that was then followed up by a long throw into the box. We though played the ball along the ground, employing a number of short passes to split open their flanks. Skill that more often than not, resulted in a dangerous ball into their area that only a pulled shirt or a shove could prevent being turned into something more prosperous. Did they like it?

Not a lot!

They were even more unhappy when one such cross was met by the head of Dalby to put us ahead. The goal had been coming and was thoroughly deserved. The sheep behind the goal, who had been as silent as lambs since kick off, shoved their heads down even deeper into the grass. Wolves wearing blue shirts were ruling the sheep pen and they, just like their team, had whites showing in their eyes.

The match then could have become a great advert for this league as our visitors, casting aside their superior than thou attitudes, began to play a bit of football themselves. And it's usually about this point in a film that the female lead comes into prominence. Sure enough, its hair blowing in the wind and blouse sticking tightly to its chest, the old women with the whistle began strutting its stuff and spoiling the game. Their players now only having to hint at a whimper to be awarded free kicks all about and around our area.

Sure, we were being awarded free kicks too. But only ever inside our own half. Only once, over the entire 90 minutes did we get one anywhere near their goal. In direct comparison, apart from the odd offside decision, each and every kick that they 'won', was inside our half of the pitch. How does simple fatigue account for those stats?

Nevertheless, with Arnold ruling his entire area in a manner completely foreign to Oxley, and his defensive colleagues just as so minded, we were restricting them to just long, usually well misdirected, punts at goal. Up front we looked sharp, our defence had its wits about it and even in midfield, with Dunn making his first league appearance, our boots were being put to productive use. Wrexham might well have had the financial backing of some Hollywood stars (Who are they again?) but we had the force of a home crowd behind us. Money may well talk, but it can't shout or sing anything like as effectively as our supporters can!

So when, during the second half, we increased our lead as Murphy weaved through their defence before planting the ball in the back of the net, the ground just went into orbit. Goooooooooooooooooal!

Two nil up and just a third or more of the game to go. Lubbly Dubbly. It was going to be quiet in the Welsh fields and valleys tonight and even the sales of mint sauce would be down given that few amongst the, oh so quiet, North Bank would be up for anything even loosely related to ram raiding once they got back. What happened to supporting your team then then lads?

Unfortunately, just minutes after our second goal, their choir masters were able to ruffle up some sort of a response from their flocks. We had lost the ball in midfield, and it got swept wide. Dark druid magical forces then took a hand, partially blinding Ralph such that his opponent was able to sweep past him and deliver a ball into the area where it got tapped home. Suddenly they were all bleating and baaing, whilst we, almost completely oblivious to their goal, were surrounding our stricken defender.

Ralph obviously had to go off and this, alongside their quick response to our goal, really effected how the rest of the game was played out. Our defensive line had been well balanced up to this point. Equally the blossoming partnership between Ralph and Bridges had now been brought to abrupt halt. So, not only were we now weaker defensively but also Bridges dangerous attacks down the wings had become almost as rare as Rodney's donations to charity.

These twin blows allowed Wrexham to push forward far more confidently than they had displayed in any period of the game so far. Urged on by their fans who had mysteriously discovered their voices, they were using the absence of Ralph to bear down our right flank with relative ease. Further substitutions were made by both managers, but the tide's flow continued being more against us than for. Even so, we were still creating chances, grazing the posts on at least two further occasions.

The game itself was very excited and could have become totally absorbing save for the referee who just couldn't resist awarding them free kicks whilst, at almost the same time, totally ignoring our, far more legitimate, claims. Does tiredness (I,e Being unfit!) really result in arms that can only point in one direction?

Not unexpectedly then, they eventually got their second goal, and the game was back on level terms. It was gutting. We had been playing so well but fate, or the ref's stats, had intervened and all of our efforts were now for nowt. However, unlike in very recent times, no heads were dropping and, urged on by Brown, we continued going forward seeking our third goal that surely would have been decisive given that time was now swiftly running out.

We should have got it too! First Dalby was clearly pulled back inside the penalty area as he raced for a ball that he would easily have struck home and then, just minutes later, Murphy was bundled over as he broke into the area with the ball. Strangely, or perhaps not, the referee although just a few feet away, saw nuffin on both occasions.

After the game, it was interesting to note the comments that were being made about these two incidents from people who had observed them from different places around the ground. Those inside the loud and vivacious West Stand saw what happened clearly and had absolutely no doubts at all about the decisions the referee should have made. The same story holding for those who were even closer to the action in the South Bank. However deep inside cackle and sipped tea territory, the view was slightly different, particularly with regard to Murphy, who some felt was going down when it was easier to just keep on going and so score.

With three apes clinging to his back, it's kind of hard to understand their point. But it is to be supposed that when one is busily involved in sprinkling vinegar or sugar it is hard to concentrate upon whatever else might be going on. Just ask Denzil, who, like the officials, missed both of these decisive events because he was busily employed tapping things of utter unimportance into his palm device.

So, with a strange mixture of both disappointment and enjoyment, the match came to an end. Wrexham will claim, through rose coloured second half lenses, that they deserved a point. We though, will maintain our right to all three. Yes, we had let a two goal lead slip too easily. Equally the loss of one player should not have had such an effect upon both our play and balance. That said, as a team we had performed possibly our best football of this term and certainly there cannot be any doubts about our determination and desire to succeed. Factors that, officials aside, would have comfortably seen us pass the post.

Alas though the third team out there fully lived up to their name. Both linesman, increasingly pathetically, looked to the referee before making any decisions. And he was someone whose card was heavily marked in favour of the team that is currently (For how long one wonders) being swamped by piles of dollars. Of course, the scribe of these scrolls harbours a similar amount of bias, but towards Blues. However, he is honest, and indeed proud enough to advertise that fact by wearing the badge rather than preferring to hide behind one of dubious neutrality.

Come on you Blues!!